The Importance of Ka’b ibn Zuhayr’s Burdah to Classical and Modern Islamic Poetry

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ABSTRACT

The Importance of Ka’b ibn Zuhayr’s Burdah to Classical and Modern Islamic Poetry

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Ka’b’s ibn Zuhayr’s *Su’ad Has Departed* ode is one of the most notable examples of odes praising the Prophet Muhammad. Called one of the most eloquent of classic Arabic poems, it also serves as a historical document of the early Islamic period. As a poet, Ka’b became a famous figure after he recited his *burdah* ode for the Prophet. This thesis studies Ka’b’s *burdah* ode and the influence of his poem after his death. The first chapter presents a brief biography of Ka’b’s life, including his family of poets, his poems, his *diwan*, and his death. The second chapter looks at the story of Ka’b’s conversion to Islam as the context for the *burdah* ode. In analyzing the structure of Ka’b’s praising ode, it reviews the debate about how many verses of Ka’b’s ode exist. The third chapter views Ka’b’s *Banat Su’ad qasidah* in the classical and medieval contexts. It identifies one indication of the importance of Ka’b’s ode as an archetype of Islamic literature and the prevalence of its influence across multiple formats, including hadith books, Sufi, Islamic history, and literary sources. The fourth and final chapter summarizes

commentaries and translations of Ka'b's poem and examines the posthumous influence of *Su'ad Has Departed*. The chapter ends with a comparison of the most prominent praising odes of the Prophet Muhammad from three Arabic/Islamic literary traditions – the classical, medieval Arabic, and Modern periods. The conclusion notes the importance of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's *burdah* ode to classical and modern Islamic poetry and suggests more studies on Ka'b's ode *mu'aradat* will further advance this important academic topic.

Table of Contents

Introduction

As the earliest form of Arabic literature, poetry has long occupied an important position in the Arabian Peninsula, beginning with pre-Islamic (*jahiliyyah*) society. One important function of poetry during this time was as an oral mechanism to document tribal history as well as for poets (*shu'ara'*) to illustrate their prestige and stature in their own and relative to other tribes. Some of the most famous pre-Islamic poets in the Arabian Peninsula include Imru' al-Qais, al-Nabighah al-Dhubyani, Tarafah ibn al-'Abd, Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma (Smith, 7). Arab literary critics contend that poetry is more eloquent than prose due to its capacity for unleashing the imagination, its finesse in use of language, and its beauty of melody to the ear (al-Fnisan, 6).

The *qasida* is one form of poetry that originated in pre-Islamic Arabia. The classic Arabic form of *qasida,* running between 8 and 800 lines, has the same rhyme in each line. In the 9th century, ibn Qutaybah in his book, Kitab al-Shi'r wa-al-Shu'ara (Book of Poetry and Poets), writes that Arabic *qasidas* are formed of three parts starting with a nostalgic opening (*al-'atlal*), travel (*rahil*), and the message of the poem (*al-gharadh min al-qasida*) (Smith, 11-12). Later forms of Arabic poetry were typically of two types: *ghazal* (love poetry) and *madih* (praise poetry) (al-Fnisan, 6).

Composing poems in praise of the Prophet Muhammad became a common form of poetry during and following his life. Such works were considered an example of a Muslim's duty in the furtherance of Islam. In their early days, these poems were an important weapon in defense of

the religion and the Prophet's moral teachings and against his enemies (Abu Naji, 5-6). One famous poet, Hassan ibn Thabit, is referred to as the Prophet's poet, although there are other prominent poets, including Ka'b ibn Malik, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, al-Nabigha al-Ja'di, and Abd Allah ibn Rawahah, who are also noted for their praise poems to the Prophet. Some non-Muslim poets are also known for their works in praise of the Prophet. One example is Al-A'sha, a non-Muslim, who recited praise verse to the Prophet Muhammad. His *burdah* poem is the oldest praise to the Prophet.

Three famous examples of odes praising the Prophet Muhammad are Ka'b's *burdah*, the *Bant Su'ad's qasida* (Su'ad has Departed), al-Busiri's *burdah*, and Shawqi's *Nahj al-Burdah* (The Way of the Mantle) (Hassan, 135-137). This ode by Ka'b ibn Zuhayr has retained its importance from the time of the Prophet until now (al-Bawab, p.5, and al-Mahasna, p.484). It is widely regarded as one of most beautiful classic Arabic poems in form and content as well as an important historical document of one of the most significant periods in Islamic history. Scholars of Islamic studies, especially *hadith*, which a report of deeds and saying of the Prophet Muhammad, history, and literature have studied Ka'b's ode and it is widely referenced in historical and literary works. The value of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's ode lies in its depiction of Muslim history during the time of the Prophet Muhammad's life and its contribution to the historical chain of transmission (*isnad*) and context (*matn*) of such poetic works. Since the time of the Prophet, Arabic linguistic and literary scholars have studied and written commentaries on Ka'b's *Bant Su'ad's* ode. Some of these provide linguistic or grammatical explanations, while others have focused on the beauty of the lyrics or concentrated on the symbolism in the poem. In addition to Arabic, scholarly commentaries on this work exist in many non-Arabic languages, including Persian, Turkish, English, French, Germany, and others (Ikbal, 7-8).

To consider the importance of Ka'b's ode, one must begin with its original purpose. Ka'b created this work in praise to the Prophet Muhammad and as a profession of his acceptance of the teachings of Islam. As the Prophet listened to him reciting the ode, he bestowed upon Ka'b his mantle (*burdah*) in thanks and recognition. This act marks the beginning of the tradition of Arabic Muslim poets creating verses to praise the Prophet, starting with Ka'b continuing through al-Busiri (d 1294 AD) and ending with Ahmed Shawqi (d 1932 AD) (al-Bawab, 5).

This thesis studies the life of Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, as seen in details of his family background and his poems and *diwans*. This thesis considers Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* ode and examines the story of Ka'b's conversion to Islam in the presence of the Prophet Muhammad. The research discusses the various sources of Ka'b's burdah ode, including hadith books, Sufi, Islamic history, and other literary informants. The thesis looks to the influence of Ka'b's poems after his life by looking to commenters, contrafaction (*mu'aradat*), and translations. It compares Ka'b's *burdah* ode, with al-Busiri's *burdah qasidah*, and Shawqi's *Nahj al-Burdah* poem.

Chapter I: Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's Life

Ka'b ibn Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma al-Muzani is one of the famous classical Arabic poets or *mukhadram* and was a close companion of the Prophet Muhammad. He became one of the early converts to Islam, soon after the Prophet started his mission. Ka'b created poems during both the pre-Islamic and Islamic period (al-Ansari, p.30, al-Sukari, p.1, Fa'our, p.5, Qumihha, p.8, al-Taba', p.7, al-Hatti, p.7, Zaydan, vol.1, p.183, al-Bustani, p.267, Sharrab, p.29, and al-Jamel, p.13). Ka'b's reputation as a poet predated the emergence of Islam; however, his stature rose markedly after he recited his burdah for the Prophet Muhammad (al-Taba', 5).

A Family of Poets:

The only information known about the origin of Ka'b's family is that they were members of one of the Banu Ghatafan, an ancient Arab tribe located north of Medinah, after they left Muzaynah tribe, which is located in the west of Saudi Arabia (al-Fnisan, p.7-8, al-Taba', p.8, Ikbal, p. 8, and Qumihha, p.9).

Ka'b ibn Zuhayr was raised in a household with a rich family tradition of poetry. He was the oldest son of Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma (520- 609 AD), a leading poet in pre-Islamic Arabia. Known for his role as one of the poets of the classic *mu'allaqăt* (poems that were hung in the Ka'ba at Mecca), he was a man of rank and wealth (Smith, 13). Umar ibn al-Khattab listed Zuhayr was purportedly his favorite among the classic Arabic poets (ibn Qutayba, vol.1, p.137, and al-Ansari, p.30). Ka'b's grandfather, Abi Sulma, was a poet, as was his aunt, Sulma, his father's uncle, Bashama ibn al-Ghadeer, and his brother, Bujayr. Following in his footsteps as

poets were his son, Uqba ibn Ka'b, and his grandson al-'Awam ibn Uqba, (al-Ansari, p.30-32, al-Sukari, p.1, al-Jamel, p.13, Fa'our, p.5, Qumihha, p.12-22. al-Hatti, p.8, al-Bustani, p.267, Sharrab, p.31-32, Alfred, p.13-14, Ikbal, p.12-13, and al-Fnisan, p.8). In *al-Rawd al-Unuf,* Al-Suhayli describes Ka'b, his father Zuhayr, his son Uqba, and his grandson al-'Awam as the greatest poets in classic Arabic literature (al-Suhayli, vol.7, p.292).

Educated at home, Ka'b grew up surrounded by family members always composing verses, some of which would take a whole year to revise. Although the majority of pre-Islamic Arabs were illiterate, Ka'b was taught to read and write Arabic by his father (Qumihha, 15). As a child, Ka'b's father also taught him poetry, but he was forbidden to recite poetry for fear that his lack of proficiency would draw criticism of the family reputation. However, he soon began to disobediently recite verses, for which he was frequently punished severely with beatings and even imprisonment (Qumihha, 12). These stories illustrate the high rigor of poetic ability expected of Ka'b, and the level of importance that his father Zuhayr placed on not beginning to recite poetry until he was certain that Ka'b could do so in a manner that reflected well upon his family. Finally satisfied that his son was ready to correctly perform, his father gave him permission to recite verses (Fa'our, p.5, Qumihha, p.12, al-Sukari, p.1, al-Taba', p.10, al-Hatti, p.9-10, al-Bustani, p.267, and al-Fnisan, p.8). Under his father's tutelage, Ka'b also became a leading poet in the classical Arabic tradition, and Zuhayr took much pride in Ka'b, his oldest son (al-Hatti, p.9, and Qumihha, p.12).

His Poems:

Mu'awiyah I, the first caliph of the Umayyad dynasty (661-680 AD), believed that the Muzaynah tribe had produced the best classic Arabian poets Zuhayr, and later the best in the

Islamic era, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr and Ma'n ibn Za'idah (al-Taba', 10). Ibn Sallam al-Jumahi in his *Tabaqat Fuhul al-Su'rar'* (Classes of Champion Poets) established the *tabaqat* (classes or levels) in classic Arabic poets; he places Ka'b in the second class (*tabaqah*) (al-Jumahi, vol.1, p. 97). In *al-Shi'r wal-Shu'ara',* Ibn Qutayba believes that Ka'b is a noteworthy Arabic poet (ibn Qutayba, vol.1, p.154). When ibn Abd Rabbih wrote about the value of classic Arabic poems in his book *al-'Iqd al-Farid* (The Unique Necklace), he mentioned Ka'b's *burdah* as an example of the significance of poems (ibn Abd Rabbih, vol.5, p.288). And when Khalaf al-'Ahmar, one of famous classic Arab critics, was asked who had written the best poems, Zuhayr or his son Ka'b, he stated that he personally would prefer Ka'b, but many people still remember Zuhayr's poems. This isn't conclusive evidence that Zuhayr is a better poet than Ka'b, but it does raise the question of why one poet's work is better remembered than another's.

Critics of classic Arabic verse believe Ka'b's poems to be coherent and consistent, particularly as they employ sophisticated wording and display elegant meaning (al-Sukari, 1). In the modern period, al-Zayat, an Egyptian Arabic literature scholar, recognizes that Ka'b recited poems in many different subjects, and he shows a range of word choice and a complexity in the structure of his poems (al-Zayat, 47). Ka'b has true stature within the field of classic Arabic poetry, and an important reputation in Islamic history and Arabic literature (Qumihha, p.22, and Fa'our, p.6). Many of Ka'b's descriptive poems (*wasf*), are of subjects including camels, zebras, ostriches, wolves, and others (Ikbal, 13-14). He typically employs a pre-Islamic poetry style, which has three parts: lyric-elegiac prelude (*nasib*), a description of a journey (*rahil*), and the purpose of the poem (*al-gharadh min al-qasida*). Ka'b often describes his camel or horse and aspects of the journey in his poems. Ka'b wrote a praise ode for al-Ansar after he became a

Muslim, a poem inviting his tribe to convert to Islam, and a lampoon ode (*hija*) for the Quraysh, who were a powerful merchant tribe that controlled Mecca and its Ka'ba.

Until the 19th century, readers and scholars interested in Arabic literature knew only a few of Ka'b's poems, including *Banat Su'ad,* his praise to al-Ansar, his lampoon to his brother and the Prophet Muhammad, and some of his stories in classical Arabic literature. After he was more widely published, readers now have access to a richer assemblage of his poetry, and Arabic literary critics can undertake a more comprehensive study of his verses (al-Taba', 11).

Ka'b's *Diwan*:

Ka'b ibn Zuhayr has more than four *diwans*, covering most Arabic poetic themes (Qumihha, 29-40) and a number of commentaries on his *diwan* exist. The first collection of Ka'b's *diwan* is by al-Sukari, and is approximately 175 pages. The other gathering of Ka'b *diwan* is by al-'Askari, with 211 pages and two sections: Ka'b's life and Ka'b's poems. Al-'Askari explains and interprets many of Ka'b's poems. The third collection of Ka'b's *diwan* is by Umar al-Taba'. In its 200 pages, Al-Taba' gives a brief biography of Ka'b's life and provides discussion about the meaning of each verse. The fourth gathering of Ka'b's *diwan* by Ali Fa'our is around 110 pages. In this work, Fa'our writes about Ka'b's life in his introduction. He explains the various meanings and symbols in Ka'b's *diwan*. In addition, al-Sukari wrote a commentary on Ka'b's *diwan* in which he explains Ka'b's *burdah*.

Ka'b's *diwan* is not extensive; it has just a few *qasidas* and some *qit'ahs*, which are short poems and less than seven *bayts*-verses. One important question when considering Ka'b's standing as a great Arabic poet, and his long life, is why are there so few pages in his *diwan*? As it may appear that Ka'b was not nearly as prolific after he became a Muslim, some have

suggested that he only created a few *qit'ahs* after his conversion to Islam. Potentially, due to his devotion to practicing Islam, his poetic output was severely reduced (Qumihha, 23). However, others, including al-Jahiz in his *Al-Bayan wa al-Tabyin* (The Book of Eloquence and Demonstration), believe that many of Ka'b's poems were lost in the early days of Islam (al-Jahiz, vol.2, p.4).

His Death:

There is no information in hadith sources about Ka'b's life in the 7th century AD. The various biographical and historical sources are vague on the exact year of his death. However, a few scholars believe he died in 661 or 662 AD. This may be suggested by a famous legend that Mu'awiyah I, who established the Umayyad Dynasty, bought the Prophet's mantle or *burdah* (which was bestowed on Ka'b ibn Zuhayr by the Prophet) from Ka'b or his heirs. According to this legend, Ka'b may have died during or around the time of the Mu'awiyah caliphate. What is perhaps the more important question is from whom did Mu'awiyah buy the *burdah*: was it from Ka'b or his heirs? (Smith, p.29, al-Taba', p.8, al-Hatti, p.20-21, Sharrab, 32, Ikbal, p.8-9, and al-Fnisan, p.7). One source, al-Taba' considers that the date of Ka'b's death might be found if references mentioned how old Ka'b was when he recited his burdah to the Prophet Muhammad (al-Taba', 8).

Chapter II: Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's relationship to the Prophet and the Meaning of *Burdah*

Ka'b ibn Zuhayr's relationship to the Prophet:

Some Arab poets who were opponents of the Prophet Muhammad used their verses to satirize him. After the conquest of Mecca (630 AD), some of these poets converted to Islam and became Muslims, while others who resisted the new faith went into hiding. Two of these poets were Ka'b and his brother Bujayr. Initially, both were opponents of the Prophet, and then Bujayr became a Muslim, which angered his brother Ka'b and his family. Ka'b continued to satirize the Prophet, and he sent the following verse (or *qit'ah*) as a message of his displeasure to Bujayr.

> Take, you two, a message to Bujayr from me,
> "Did you accept what you said at *al-Khayf*, did you?
> You drank with *al-Ma'mon* a thirst-quenching cup,
> He gave you a first draught, then a second.
> You abandoned the ways of right guidance and followed him,
> To what was it, woe to you, that he guided you?
> To a religion no father or mother of yours ever followed,
> Nor any one of your kinsmen![1]

When Bujayr received his brother's *qit'ah*, he recited it to the Prophet, who exclaimed, "Ka'b says the truth, I am the trustworthy one (*al-Ma'mun*), and he is a liar: and certainly he found no father or mother of his following Islam." Then Bujayr replied with the following *qit'ah* to his brother:

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[1] Stetkevych, p.34-35, Smith, p.29-30, Fa'our, p.60, al-Taba', p.15-18, al-Sukari, p.4-6, al-Tibrizi, p.22-24, al-Ansari, p.33-35, al-Hamawi, p.6-7, Qumihha, p.16-18, al-'Askari, p.12 and 25, Iqbal, p.15-18, and Hassan, p.138.

Who will take Ka’b a message, “Will you accept the religion for which
You falsely blame me, though it is the more judicious course?
To God alone, not to *al-‘Uzza* nor *al-Lat*,
Make for safety, while you can, and submit,
Before a day when no one is safe or escapes from the Fire,
Except the submissive Muslim, pure of heart.
To me the religion of Zuhayr –and it is nothing-
And the religion of Abu Sulma are now forbidden.”

The Prophet was in al-Ta’if, and when he returned to Medina, Bujayr wrote to his brother that the Prophet had announced that whenever Muslims see any polytheistic poets attacking Islam, or the Prophet, they must kill them. Bujayr asks Ka’b if he wants to save his life by coming as a penitent to the Prophet and converting to Islam, explaining that the Prophet would then spare him. Bujayr’s ominous message to his brother leaves Ka’b tense and concerned. Members of Ka’b’s tribe, the Banu Muzaynah said, “He is as good as dead,” and they refused to offer him refuge.

Feeling that he was in grave danger, Ka’b decided to travel to Medina. When he came upon the Prophet Muhammad, he did not recognize him. Ka’b sat down before the Prophet and said, “O Apostle of God, if I were to bring you Ka’b ibn Zuhayr, repentant and submitting to Islam, would you accept him?” And when the Prophet replied, “Yes” then Ka’b said to him, “I am Ka’b.” Suddenly, one zealous member of Madinan Helpers (*Ansar*), a tribe in Medina that supported the Prophet, jumped up and cried, “Let me cut off his head!” However, the Prophet restrained him. Then Ka’b recited his *qasidah* to the Prophet (Stetkevych, p.34-35, al-‘Askari, p.26, and Sells, p.8).

Going into hiding, Ka'b began to feel regret. He decided to take a risk and went to Medina in disguise and stayed close to the Prophet. Ka'b asked the Prophet if a person repented for his mistakes and converted to Islam would be forgiven or not. Muhammad answered affirmatively. Ka'b said, "Even Ka'b ibn Zuhayr?" The Prophet responded affirmatively, and then Ka'b revealed his face and began reciting his poem, *Banat Su'ad*, *burdah* (literally, the Mantle), which would become a famous ode in praise of the Prophet (Smith, 29-30). The short exchanges of *qit'ahs* between Ka'b and his brother Bujayr represent the process of Ka'b's eventual conversion to Islam, which led Ka'b to renounce his tribe's polytheistic beliefs and to proclaim his submission and allegiance to the Prophet and to Islam (Stetkevych, 36), which culminated in his now famous ode, the *Banat Su'ad*.

Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad Qasidah* (Su'ad Has Departed Ode):

The Mantle Ode (*Qasidat al-Burdah*) by Ka'b ibn Zuhayr is the first poetic *burdah,* and perhaps one of the most recited poems in history. *Qasidat al-Burdah* opens "Su'ad has departed" (*banat Su'ad*). Ka'b recited his poem to the Prophet Muhammad in the year 630, after which he converted to Islam. Marking this moment when the Prophet gave him his mantle (*burdah*) (Stetkevych, 30), Ka'b's ode takes the title of *banat Su'ad*, *lamit* Ka'b, *qasidat al-burah*, and *burdah* (Ikbal, 38).

Ka'b's *burdah* ode structure includes three parts: the elegiac prelude (*nasib*), the desert journey (*rahil*), and the praise section (*madih*). The poem's rhyming feature is *lam,* an abbreviation for Allāh (Stetkevych, p.30-31, Qumihha, p.36, al-Jamal, p.10, and Sells, p.8). Ka'b's *Qasidah Banat Su'ad* illustrates how Arabic poetry, especially panegyric verse and *ghazal,* became the major literary format of Islamic poems (Stetkevych, 32).

Ka'b's verses express a transfer of political allegiance from his tribe, Banu Muzaynah, to the Prophet Muhammad and the emerging Islamic state. His clan, Banu Muzaynah, rejects him. His poem shows the ceremony of Ka'b's submission and declaration of sincerity when in fear of being killed by Muslims. The case was clear to Ka'b when the Prophet Muhammad declared to him that Ka'b has two choices: flee or convert to Islam, and Ka'b chooses to be a Muslim. Ka'b's *Qasidah Banat Su'ad* plays a role in redeeming the poet, and the recitation of it literally saves his life (Stetkevych, 32-37).

Ka'b's *banat Su'ad*'s ode shows the evolution between the role of classic Arabic poetry in *Jahiliyyah* and later Islamic poetry. A pre-Islamic poet shows his loyalties to his tribe and his sheik through his verses, whereas an Islamic poem has as its purpose a sincere belief in Islam. Ka'b's *burdah* ode follows the same full formal structure of *Jahiliyyah* panegyric odes, opening with an elegiac prelude (*nasib*) in verses 1-12. He describes his lover, Su'ad (felicity) by mentioning her beauty and then her perfidy. In the second section (*rahil*) — verses 13-33 — he describes the female camel that can reach the distant oasis of Su'ad. The third and final section of the poem is the praise section (*madih*) — in verses 33-55 — which has three parts: 1) verses 33-41: the poet's submission and declaration of allegiance to the Prophet and Islam; 2) verses 42-48: a comparison of the Prophet with a lion; and 3) verses 49-55: the praise of the emigrants (*Muhajirun*), the early group of Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina (Stetkevych, 37-38).

Arab scholars disagree over the structure of Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* verses. Some, including Jasser Abd Safiya and Abdulrahim Yousef al-Jamal, believe that *Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed* has three sections: introduction in *ghazal* from the first verse to verse 37; an apology to the Prophet and praise for him from verse 38 to verse 50; and praise to the Emigrants (*al-*

Muhajirun) from verse 51 to the end of the poem (al-Mahasna, p.494, and al-Jamal, p.10). Al-Dhahabi in *Tarikh al-Islam* believes it is composed of 39 verses. Ibn Diezel thinks it contains 48 verses. Abu Abdullah al-Hakim in his *Al-Mustadrak* says that it is 51 verses. Ibn Kathir in his work *The Beginning and the End* (*Al-Bidayah wa-Nihayah* or *Tarikh ibn Kathir*) and ibn Sayyid al-Nas in his book *Manh al-Madh* agree that it is 54 verses. Ibn Hijjah al-Hamawi, in his commentary work about Ka'b's ode, believes it is 55 verses (al-Hamwi, 27-64). Al-Nuwayri in his book *Nihayat al-Arab* and al-Khatib al-Tibrizi and ibn Hisham al-Ansari in their commentaries for Ka'b's *banat Su'ad qasidah* say it is 57 verses (al-Tibrizi, p.3-6, and al-Ansari, p.23-27). Ibn Hisham, in his *As-Sirah an-Nabawiyyah,* and Abu Zaid al-Qurashi, in his *jamharat 'Ash'ar al-Arab,* agree it is 58 verses. Al-Amiri in his work *Bahjat al-Majalis* and Yusuf an-Nabhani in *Al-Majmo'ah an-Nabhanih* think it is 59 verses. One modern Arabic scholar, Muhammad al-Sid Ibrahim writes that it is 60 verses in his book *'Athar Banat Su'ad fi al-Turath al-'Arabi* (al-Fnisan, 69-70). In Ka'b's *diwan*, al-Sukari, al-'Askari, and al-Taba' believe it is 55 verses (al-Sukari, p.109-116, al-'Askari, p.26-43, and al-Taba', p. 19-21). However, in Ka'b's *diwan* by Fa'our it is 59 verses (Fa'our, 60-67).

Part 1: Lyric-Elegiac Prelude (*Nasib*) (vv.1-12)[2]:

1. *Su'ad has departed and today my heart is sick,*
   A slave to her traces unransomed and enchained.
2. *On the morning of departure when her tribe set out,*
   Su'ad was but a bleating antelope with languid gaze and kohl-lined eye.
3. *When she smiles she flashes side teeth wet*
   As if with a first draught of wine or with a second,
4. *Mixed with cool water from a wadi's bend, in a pebbled streambed limpid*

[2] Translation by Suzanne Stetkevych.

And sparkling in the noontime sun, chilled by the north wind

5. *Cleansed by the winds of all dirt and dust,*
   And by white cumuli left overflowing with a night cloud's rain.
6. *Alas! what a mistress, had she been true to what she promised*
   Had true advice not gone unheeded
7. *But she is a mistress in whose blood are mixed*
   Calamity, mendacity, inconstancy, and perfidy
8. *She never stays the same but is as mutable*
   As the ghul in her garb ever-changing.
9. *Nor does she hold fast love's bond, once she has claimed it,*
   Except as sieves hold water.
10. *The false promises of 'Urqub were her model;*
    Her promises were nothing except empty prattle
11. *I hope and pray that in the end they will be fulfilled,*
    But they will remain forever unfulfilled.
12. *Do not be deceived by the desires she aroused, the promises she made,*
    For hopes and dreams are a delusion.

Ka'b is not the only companion of the Prophet who began his poem with *nasib*. Humaid ibn Thawr al-Hilali does the same when he begins his ode in praise of the Prophet when he mentions Sulayma in the first section of the poem (al-Mahasna, 497). Moreover, Ka'b is not the only poet in classical Arabic literature who started his ode *Su'ad Has Departed*. Examples include his father, Zuhayr, al-Nabigha al-Dhubiyani, Rabi'ah ibn Makrom al-Dabbi, Qu'nb ibn Dumarah and others, but their works do not have the high reputation as does *Ka'b's banat Su'ad qasidah* (Ibrahim, 61).

Ka'b constructed his poem in the traditional style, thus using the elegiac prelude. He described his departed mistress, Su'ad. Su'ad is taken from the Arabic root *s-'-d,* that is *sa'adah*, which is translated as prosperity, good fortune, happiness, or felicity. The scholar Suzanne Stetkevych suggests the first part of Ka'b's ode serves as an allegorical elegy to a bygone Golden

Age, the *Jahiliyyah*. This section can be viewed as a metaphor for Ka'b's political status since he is unransomed (*lam yufda*) or unrequited (*lam yujza*) as al-Sukkari believes (Stetkevych, 38-40).

Su'ad's failure to return to her poet-lover may be understood as a metaphor for how Ka'b's tribe was unwilling to pay his ransom and to his avenge his. Similarly, one can divide Ka'b's description of the lost "felicity" into two parts. First, in verses 2-5, the poet mentions how her beauty is like the antelope and her teeth are like the finest wine. Secondly, in verses 6-12, Ka'b's describes Su'ad's promise (Stetkevych, 40).

In verse 8, the poet's simile for Su'ad's inconstancy is the protean *ghul*, which is a kind of spirit or *jinn* (Stetkevych, 40). In verse 10, Ka'b describes Su'ad's faithlessness using the phrase "the false promises of 'Urqub" (*mawa'idu 'Urqubin*). This phrase refers to 'Urqub ibn Nasr, who lived in Medina before the Jews and the Prophet Muhammad arrived, and who promises to give his brother some dates, but he procrastinates, and ultimately gives him nothing. [3] As a result, in part one of *qasidat al-burdah,* Ka'b's *nasib* describes his hopes, betrayal, deception and delusion. The poet ended this portion of the *nasib* with the use of Qur'anic words in two places. First, in the ending of verse 10, Ka'b chose *abatilu* as a rhyme word, which means empty prattle, which in the Qur'anic use of *batil* (false, falsehood, vanity, lie) in association with *kufr* (unbelief), and may be translated as opposition to truth (*haqq*). Second, in the ending of verse 12, he uses *tadlilu* as a rhyme word, which translates as delusion. This word is taken from *dallala*, to lead astray, into error, which is associated with *kufr* (disbelief), *skirk* (polytheism), and *zulm* (oppression, injustice), and stands in opposition to *huda* (right guidance). In verses 6-12, one may surmise that Ka'b was in a hurry to abrogate his former beliefs, e.g., the

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[3] Fa'our, p.62, al-Sukari, p.8-9, al-'Askari, p.29, al-Ansari, p.149, Qumihha, p.110, al-Fnisan, p.79-80, Stetkevych, p.41, al-Jamal, p.29, and al-Taba', p.23.

spirit of Jahiliyyah (Stetkevych, 41-42). Using these Qur'anic associations and references indicates that Ka'b's intent is true, and that he is sincere in his embrace of Islam.

Reading from the prelude to the subsequent journey portion (*rahil*) in verses 13-14, Ka'b continues to search for Su'ad through the desert, even though he has disavowed his lover in the previous *nasib* section. Abdulaziz al-Man', a scholar of classical Arabic literature at King Saud University, thinks that the prose in the first part of Ka'b's ode is that of high eloquence in Arabic, and thus a reader cannot construe it as a representation of Ka'b's life. Another scholar, Abdulhalim Hanafi, believes that the first section of Ka'b's *qasidah* contains two concepts: Su'ad's beauty and Su'ad's changing morality, both of which represent Ka'b's situation when he composed the poems. Su'ad's beauty signifies Ka'b's asking the Prophet's forgiveness, and Su'ad's changing morality signifies Ka'b's tribal friends, who did not support him. Another interpretation, by Hashim Yaghi, is that Su'ad's beauty symbolizes Ka'b's previous circumstances, in which he had a good life. And Su'ad's changing morality can be likened to the rise of Islam and the changes it wrought in Ka'b's life. Moreover, Ali al-Mahasna believes that Su'ad shapes Ka'b's life before he became a Muslim (al-Mahasna, 495-497 and 500).

Part 2: The Desert Journey (*Rahil*) – Verses 13-31:

13. Su'ad alit at nightfall in a land unreachable
But by the best of she-camels of noble breed and easy pace,
14. Never to be reached but by a she-camel huge and robust
That despite fatigue sustains her amble and her trot,
15. Sweet gushing from the glands behind her ears,
Eager for the nameless road, its way markers effaces,
16. With the eyes of a lone white antelope she pierces the unknown
When badlands and sand dunes blaze in high noon's sun,
17. Stout where the pendant hangs, full where the shackle binds,

Her build, the best of all the stallions' daughters,

18. Huge as a mountain, her sire her sibling, by a dam blood-stallion bred,
Her uncle by sire and dam the same, She is long-necked, brisk-paced.

19. The tick walks on her hide, but then the smoothness
Of her breast and flank makes it slip off.

20. Sturdy as the onager, her sides piled with meat,
Her knees set wide, clear of the breastbone's daughters,

21. As if her muzzle and the two sides of her jaw
Between her eyes and throat were an oblong stone.

22. She brushes with a tail like a stripped palm branch, tufted
Over a dry udder, its milk ducts unimpaired,

23. Hook-nosed, in her ears the expert eye discerns nobility of breed,
In her two cheeks, great smoothness.

24. Overtaking others, she speeds on legs lance-like and nimble,
Like an oath annulled they barely touch the ground,

25. Brown their sole sinews, they scatter pebbles in their wake,
So tough no shoes protect them on the hilltops

26. On a day when the chameleon is as burnt as if
His sun-scorched parts were bread baked on hot rock.

27. As if the repeating motion of her forelegs when she is drenched in sweat
And when the narrow mountain peaks are cloaked in the mirage,

28. And the camel driver his song their goad, says to the tribe
When ashen locusts kick up pebbles, "Stop and rest,"

29. At high noon were the arms of a woman tall and middle-aged,
Risen in lament, then others, near-barren and bereft, respond,

30. Wailing, arms flailing, when the heralds announced
The death of her firstborn, bereft of reason,

31. Tearing her clothes from her breast with her bare hands,
Her woolen shif ripped from her collarbone in shreds.

In first section of the poem, Ka'b described Su'ad's body allegorically as referring to his inner morality, which leads to the second section, which concerns his journey moving from *Jahiliyyah* to Islam. In the *Rahil* section, the poet describes his she-camel. In verse 13, he notes as evidence of her intelligence that she can get to Su'ad's dwelling by herself. In verses 13-14, he sees his animal as the finest of camels given her qualities of huge size and indefatigability. In verse 15, Ka'b refers to himself using the concept of aspiration, ambition, and zeal, using the term *himmah,* which is taken from the word *'urdah*, and means "suited to" or "fit for." In verse 16, Ka'b tolerates the midday heat he encounters, and compares his she-camel to an antelope. In verse 17, the poet refers to his camel as tamed and willing to serve people, and further in verse 20 as comparable to an onajer — a kind of wild donkey native to Northern Iran — in sturdiness (Stetkevych, 42-45). In verse 20, the poet describes his camel's genealogy (Smith, 44). In verse 22, he likens his camel's tail to a domesticated palm branch, and that given her dry udder; she is not able to provide milk, serves mankind in other ways. Ka'b praises his animal in verses 24-25, noting how fast she is and how easily she walks on the roughest ground. Ali al-Mahasna thinks that Ka'b described his she-camel in the second section because of his strong yearning and long journey to reach a real happiness, which is Islam (al-Mahasna, 501). In addition, he incarnates the poet/passenger, who is leaving the Banu Muzaynah on his journey to embrace Islam and its laws.

In the final parts of the *rahil*, Ka'b depicts the heat and hardships that he found on his journey, noting in verse 26 these conditions require a strong man to master them and to survive (Stetkevych, 45). In verses 27-31, he described his she-camel's forelegs in the hottest part of the day, kicking aside the scorching pebbles to find cooler ground as they stop to rest, and some have interpreted these similes as an instinctual portrait of grief and loss (Stetkevych, 45). In

verse 29, the poet described the earth so hot that locust cannot bear them; yet, Ka'b in his fatigue touches them over and over with his feet (Smith, 44). In addition, the *rahil* section also alludes to the risk of death and the promise of rebirth in his journey, for example when in verse 30 Ka'b depicts a woman in middle age (*nasaf*) that cannot be childbearing, and her accompanying sorrow (Stetkevych, 46).

Part 3: The *Madih* (Praise Section) Verses 32-55:

32. My slanderers at her two sides denounced me saying,
"You, O Son of Abu Sulma, are as good as dead."
33. And every trusted friend in whom I put my hopes
Said, "I cannot help you; I am occupied with other things."
34. So I replied, "Out of my way, you bastards!"
For all that the All-Merciful decrees will come to pass!
35. For every man of woman born, though he be long secure,
Will one day be borne on humpbacked bier.
36. I was told God's Messenger had threatened me,
But from God's Messenger pardon is hoped.
37. Go easy, and let Him be your guide who gave to you
The gift of the Qur'an in which are warnings and discernment!
38. Do not hold me to account for what my slanderers have said,
For, however great the lies against me, I have not sinned!
39. I stood where I saw and heard what would have made
The mighty pachyderm, had it stood in my stead,
40. Quake with fear unless the Messenger of God,
By God's leave, granted it protection,
41. Until I placed my right hand, without contending,
In the hand of an avenger, his word the word.
42. He is more dreaded by me when I speak to him
And I am told, "You will be questioned and must answer,"
43. Then a lion, snapping and rapacious,

Its lair in ‘Aththar’s hollow, thicket within thicket,
44. Who in the morning feeds flesh to two lion whelps
That live on human flesh, flung in the dust in chunks,
45. Who when it assaults its match is not permitted
To leave its match unnotched,
46. For whom the braying onager falls silent,
In whose wadi no hunters stalk their prey,
47. In whose wadi lies an honest man, his weapons and torn clothes
Flung in the dust, his flesh devoured.
48. The Messenger is surely a sword from whose flash light is sought,
One of the swords of God, an Indian blade unsheathed,
49. In a band of Qurashis whose spokesman said to them in Mecca’s hollow
When they submitted to Islam, “Depart!”
50. They departed, but no weaklings departed with them,
None who flee the battle, none unsteady in the saddle, none unarmed.
51. Haughty, high-nosed champions, who on battle day
Don shirts of David’s weave,
52. White, ample, their rings interlocking
As if they were the qaf’a’ plant’s interlocking rings.
53. They walk as the white camels walk when kept in check by blows,
While the stunted black ones go astray.
54. Neither jubilant when their spears strike down a tribe,
Nor distraught when they are struck,
55. The spear does not pierce them except in the throat,
Nor do they shrink from death’s water troughs.

In verse 32, Ka’b begins what is considered the true purpose of his poem, which is to praise the Prophet Muhammad. Verses 32-36 show a ritual pattern of death and rebirth. The poet sees his death in his friend’s and his tribal kinsmen’s eyes. He has lost their support, and he loses his hope in verse 33. He expresses his grief and suffering from their betrayal. Verses 34-

35 show the poet's hope and ultimately his strong will. The significant point is in the poet's reiteration of the act of will, which began in the *nasib* through the *rahil* and ends in the *madih*. The poet considered himself as dead, a social outcast. In verses 34-35, he is crying in his grief, preparing himself to die, and finally accepts the death in verse 35. With verses 32-36 and Ka'b's expressions of loss, the ode has suddenly changed from *nasib* and r*ahil* to *madih*.

Regarding the poetic stylistic elements, there are five verses of Form 1 passive participle from *maf'ul*, including *maqtulu* (slain), *mashghulu* (occupied), *maf'ulu* (enacted), *mahmulu* (borne), and *ma'mulu* (hoped for). These are the long vowel form preceding the rhyme-consonant (*ridf*), which is seen in this poem, either -*ilu* or -*ulu*. However, all lines in these passages end in -*ulu*. In verse 33, Ka'b represented the renewal of will after the loss of hope in verses 11-12. In verse 32, Ka'b complained to the Prophet Muhammad that some falsely accused him that he already considers himself dead. In the next verse (33), he continues complaining to the Prophet about how he was betrayed by friends and kinsmen in whom he had put his past hope and trust. In verse 34, Ka'b is ready to face death if that is God's wish. Ka'b puts his life in God's hands and he speaks of God as *al-Rahman* (the merciful). In verses 36, the poem states, "I was told God's messenger had threatened me. But from God's Messenger, pardon is hoped" (*'unbi'tu 'anna rasula Allahi 'aw'adani / wa-al-'afwu 'inda rasuli Allahi ma'mulu*). Ka'b gives the Prophet authority over him with the first hemistich, and in the second, he submits to whatever that may be, while hoping for mercy. This verse represents both recognition and submission, and the poet's *shahadah* (creed) is completed in this verse. Thus, verse 36 is the crux of the ode, what Arabs term the *bayt al-qasid*. In this passage, Ka'b swears to follow the new order of Islam in all matters, religious, moral, and sociopolitical. Ka'b breaks the tension of verse 36, in the opening of verse 37 *mahlan* (go easy) and relaxes the rhetorical

intensity. He has substituted the fivefold rhyme from the *maf'ulu* pattern to that of *taf'ilu* (discernment). Consequently, after verse 37, he inserts a random *ridf* between i and u. He encourages the Prophet to follow God's command and the Qur'an and to view him with eyes of mercy (Stetkevych, 46-54). Verses 36 and 37 illustrate how the act of praising the Prophet is different than that of praising a king.

Before he became a Muslim, Ka'b's knowledge of the Qur'an was only based on what others had told him of its details and teachings (Hassan, 138). In verses 38-41 we see the representations of Ka'b's conversion to Islam. Here, the poet uses paronomasia (*tajnis*), which is a verbal pay on words that have the same or related roots but a different meaning. Employing the root *q*-*w*-*l* (to speak), he chose *aqawilu* to signify fabrication and false accusations in verse 38, and similarly in verse 41, he used *qiluhu al-qilu*, in which he refers to the veracity and the authority of the Prophet's speech. The point of this passage is to avoid the use of falsehoods in favor of speaking what is truthful or right. Ka'b portrays his fear and the danger he's in as an elephant that the elephant cannot take it before Ka'b meets the Prophet. Therefore, the poet believes that the Prophet Muhammad has the authority over his life and his death. In verse 40, he awaits his punishment yet holds out the hope of forgiveness *yur'adu* (quake with fear) and *tanwilu* (granting and protection). In verse 38, Ka'b asks for mercy, swears he is being unjustly treated, and that slanderers defame him. Verse 41 is quite similar to verse 36 in that Ka'b express his submission, as Ka'b is placing his hand in the hands of the Prophet without conditions. Al-Sukkari explains that when Arabs swear an oath, they strike each other on the right hand. Because Ka'b is afraid that the Prophet has ordered Muslims to kill him, he describes the Prophet (*dhi naqimatin*) as an avenger or one who is exacting revenge (Stetkevych, 54-56).

The passages from 32 to 41 verses can be read with the passages from verses 6 to 12 in mind, as both sections express the Jahili contract: mendacity, inconstancy, perfidy, and the failure to fulfill promises. In addition, verses 32-41 provide the recompense for the all loss that Ka'b mourns for in verses 6-12 (Stetkevych, 56). The next passage, from verses 42 to 47, represents Ka'b's deathly fear of the Prophet Muhammad. The fear is clearly shown when Ka'b revealed himself to the Prophet and awaits his judgment. The poet's use of a description of the warrior as a lion is a traditional metaphor. Ka'b represents the generous and merciful side of a lion that feed and protects his cubs, and thus Ka'b portrays the Prophet as a lion-warrior with all these traits (Stetkevych, 56-57). The final passage of Ka'b's *qasidah,* in verses 48-55, depicts the Prophet as the sword of Allah. Verses from 48 to 55 are the core of Ka'b's ode as are the verses 32 to 36. The final passage represents the high rhetorical style of *banat Su'ad qasidah*. Verse 48 states: "*The Messenger is surely a sword from whose flash of light is sought. One of the swords of God, an Indian blade unsheathed.*" Here, Ka'b repeats the Islamic message, which describes the Muslims who emigrated from Mecca to Medina.

Ka'b ibn Zuhayr closes his burdah with his depiction of the *Muhajirun* from verse 51 to verse 55. He represents in his ode that the *Muhajirun* (Emigrants) are the true followers. In verses 49-50, he gave a brief definition of Islam in four words "*whose spokesman [Muhammad?] said when they submitted to Islam 'Depart!' They departed, but the weaklings…did not depart,*" meaning those who obey the Prophet are heroes (Stetkevych, 57-58). Ka'b praises the *Muhajirun* because all Muslims are familiar with the significance and impact of *hijrah* (emigrating) in Muslim life (Hassan, 139). Since the *Muhajirun* made the difficult decision to emigrate from Mecca to Medina, Ka'b portrays them as courageous. He describes them as an elite group of proud warriors, clad in chain mail of David's weave (Dawud, identified with King

David of the Bible and Qur'an). In verse 53, the poet described the *Muhajirun* in their battles as a troop of warriors astride majestic white camels, and who are famous in battle for holding their line no matter what happened. He compares these to black camels that cannot stay in their line, and refers to them as Medinese Helper (*Ansar*). In the last two verses, Ka'b praises the *Muhajirun*, and their dedication to choose death in service to the way of God (*fi sabil Allah*) (Stetkevych, 58).

Ka'b composed his *qasidah* in his time of concern, and the spirit of a *Jahili* poet is seen within the spirit of the poem (al-Mahasna, 509). The religious concept of Ka'b's ode is slight (Hassan, 138) while its main goal is panegyric. While he praises the Prophet and the *Muhajirun,* however, one must recognize that part of Ka'b's goal in this *qasidah* is to literally save his skin. Also he does praise the *Ansar*, which leads back to when Ka'b identified himself to the Prophet, and one of the *Ansar* tried to kill Ka'b. Ka'b's ode expresses his relationship to several institutions, and illustrates the social environment of his time. The ode shows the spiritual rebirth of Ka'b when he converts to Islam, which represents the new social system. Ka'b *qasidah*'s three sections — *nasib*, *rahil*, and *madih* —show Ka'b's political conversion from his former polytheistic tribal beliefs of the Banu Muzaynah to Muhammad's and symbolizes the movement of Arabian society from the *Jahiliyyah* to Islam (Stetkevych, 58-62). Additionally, the poet did not recite the poem for donation as many classical Arabic poets did, so we can assume his praise of the Prophet and Islam is without reproach (al-Mahasna, 512).

The Prophet Muhammad accepted Ka'b's *qasidah* into Islam and in so doing, saves his head from the sword. The Prophet gave Ka'b his mantle (*burdah*) as a reward and the *burdah* becomes a part of Ka'b's praise poem. Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* is now known as the *burdah* ode for this reason (al-Jamal, p.10, and Sells, p.8). Because of the amazing value of the *burdah*,

the Umayyad and 'Abbasid's caliphs were eager to have it and the legitimacy it bestowed, wearing it on Friday prayers and during holiday blessings (Fa'our, 60). That the Prophet gave his *burdah* to Ka'b is a sign of the legitimacy of poetry under Islam, and the estimation of high value for the ode in classical Arabic literature. The Prophet's acceptance of Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* gives Ka'b the full mantle of his protection. In addition, more symbolic than the Prophet's acceptance is his *burdah* as a symbol of the soul or self. Moreover, the Prophet's dealing with Ka'b's ode became paradigmatic of the esteemed role of poetic prose in Islamic culture. Ka'b came to the Prophet for forgiveness, and what he received was the gift of his life (Stetkevych, 37&62-66). Abdulaziz al-Man' believes that the Prophet Muhammad's motivation for accepting Ka'b's ode was to show the tolerance and mercy in Islam and to woo new poets to the new mission of Islam (al-Mahasna, 496).

Chapter III: *Burdah* References in Islamic Historical and Literary Sources

The earliest known written sources of Muslim history and literature are dated a century and a half after the death of the Prophet (Stetkevych, 30-31). References to the conversion narrative of Ka'b, commonly known as the *Burdah*, can be found in the following classical literary and religious sources.

1. Some of the earliest references for Ka'b's *Burdah* are in *sirah* (traditional Muslim biographies of Muhammad). One of these is Ibn Hisham's (d.828 or 833) edited version of Ibn Ishaq's *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* (*Life of the Prophet*). Ibn Ishaq was known for collecting oral traditions about the life of the Prophet. Ibn Ishaq's (d.767 or 761) *Al-Sirah* contains about 10 pages of Su'ad Has Departed, and ibn Hisham mentions its 58 verses. Some critics of Ibn Ishaq, including Ibn Sallam al-Jumahi (d.846), were not satisfied with the veracity of Ibn Ishaq's biography, accusing him of knowingly including forged poems, and for attributing other poems to persons not known to have written any poetry (Ikbal, p.19, al-Fnisan, p.69, Sharrab, p. 36-55, and Stetkevych, p.30-31, 33, and 62). This is an important book for anyone studying the Prophet Muhammad's life and how he deals with Ka'b.

2. *Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara'* (*Classes of Champion Poets*) by ibn Sallam al-Jumahi, mentions the story of conversion and Ka'b's Burdah ode in its first volume (al-Fnisan, p.61, and al-Jamal, p.10).

3. *Jamhart Ash'ar al-Arab fi al-Jailiyyah wa l-Islam*, a selection of great poems according to the author, by Abu Zaid al-Khatab al-Qurashi (d.876), briefly mentions Ka'b's *qasidah* in about three pages in its second volume, and he mentions it having 57 verses (Ikbal, p.20 and p.31, al-Fnisan, p.61, and Sharrab, p.56-63).

4. *Al-Shi'r wal-Shu'ara'* by ibn Qutaybah al-Dinawari (d.885) mentions Ka'b's burdah in its first volume (al-Fnisan, p.61, and al-Jamal, p.10).

Tabaqat Fuhul al-Shu'ara', *Jamhart Ash'ar al-Arab fi al-Jailiyyah*, and *Al-Shi'r wal-Shu'ara'* are important books for anyone focusing on Ka'b's ode as more than the historical event.

5. Al-Sukari (d.888), a Baghdadi philologist collected and critiqued many of Ka'b's poems. He discuses Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah* in around 20 pages, and mentions 55 verses, although he did not mention the story of conversion (al-Sukari, p.109-116, Ikbal, p.19, al-Fnisan, p.62 & 69, and Stetkevych, p.33 & 61). This is a foundational study of Ka'b's ode since al-Sukari is the first known person to collect Ka'b's poems.

6. *Al-Ahad wa al-Mathani*, which is a dictionary of the companions, by ibn Abi Asim (d.900), mentions the story of conversion and Ka'b's ode (al-Fnisan, 21-22). This work contains an important thread in the story and study of Ka'b's burdah because the author mentions the companion's name, as well as some of his biography. Ibn Abi Asim also provides some details about Ka'b's parents.

7. *Al-'Iqd al-Farid* (*The Unique Necklace*), which is one of the classics of Arabic literature and a work divided into 25 sections, by Ahmad ibn Muhammad ibn 'Abd Rabbih (d.940), mentions Ka'b's *qasidah* in its sixth volume (al-Fnisan, 61).

8. *Kitab al-Aghani* (*Book of Songs*), which is an encyclopedic collection of classic Arabic poems and songs that runs over 22 volumes in modern editions and reportedly took its author 50 years to write, by Abu al-Faraj al-Isfahani (d.967) discuses Ka'b's *burdah* and the story of conversion (al-Fnisan, p.24-25, and Sharrab, p.77). It is an important source for who studies Ka'b's ode through literary book.

9. *Al-Mu'jam al-Kabir*, which is published in 25 volumes containing 7,800 pages, by al-Tabarani (d.970), mentions the story of conversion and Ka'b's *qasisah* (al-Fnisan, 25-26).

10. *Mu'jam al-Shu'ara'*, which is a dictionary of classic Arabic poets, by al-Marzubani (d.994), mentions Ka'b's *burdah* (al-Fnisan, 61).

11. Hakim al-Nishaburi's (d.1015) *Al-Mustadrak alaa al-Sahihain*, which contains 9,045 hadiths, discusses Ka'b's ode in three pages in its third volume. It mentions that the ode has 51 verses, including the story of conversion (Ikbal, p.19-20, Sharrab, p.77, and al-Fnisan p.26-30).

12. Abu Nu'aym al-Isfahani's (d.1038) *Ma'rifat al-Sahaba wa Fada'ilihim* (*Knowing the Companions and Their Merits*), which became the basis of subsequent similar works by ibn 'Abd al-Barr, ibn al-Athir, and ibn Hajar, mentions the story of conversion and Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed (al-Fnisan, 30).

13. Jibn Hazm's (d.1064) *Jawami' al-Shirah*, which is biography of the Prophet Muhammad's, mentions Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed ode (al-Fnisan, 62).

14. Al-Bayhaqi's (d.1066) *Al-Sunan al-Kubra* or *Sunan al-Bayhaqi*, which is one of the major work of the Prophet Muhammad *sunna*, and *Dala'il al-Nubuwwah* (*The Signs of Prophethood*), which is the prophetic proof of the Prophet, mention the story of conversion and 48 verses of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah* (al-Fnisan, 30-32).

15. Ibn Rashiq al-Qayrawani's (d.1071) *Al-'Umdah* (*The Pillar*), which contains the views of Arabic literary theorists and important issues of classic Arabic literature, discusses Ka'b's *qasidah* and the importance of Arabic poetry in Islamic culture. The author argues that the Prophet Muhammad welcomed Arabic poems, and he cites Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed as an example (Ibn Rashiq, vol.1, p.17-18, Qumihha, p.21, and al-Fnisan, p.62, and al-Jamal, p.10).

16. *Al-Durar fi Ikhtisar al-Maghazi wa l-Siyar*, by ibn 'Abd al-Barr al-Qurtubi (d.1071), mentions Ka'b's Burdah (al-Fnisan, 62).

17. *Al-Faiq fi Gharib al-Hadith wa'l-Athar*, by al-Zamakhshari (d.1143 or 1144), talks about Ka'b's Banat Su'ad qasidah (al-Fnisan, 62).

18. Ibn Khair al-Ishbili's (d.1179) *Al-Fihrist*, which provides some details about famous books of the author's era, mentions the story of conversion and Ka'b's ode (al-Fnisan, 32-34).

19. *Muntaha al-Talb min 'Ash'ar al-Arab*, by Muhammad ibn Mimoun (d.1190), is a manuscript containing 264 poems that the author views as noteworthy. The author begins his text by adapting Ka'b's ode as a blessing on his work, and because of its high poetic value (Ikbal, 20).

20. Ibn al-Athir al-Jazari's (d.1232 or 1233) *Al-Kamil fi al-Tarikh* (*The Complete History*), a classic Islamic history book, and *Usd al-Ghabah fi Ma'rifat al-Sahabah* (*The Lions of the Forest and the Knowledge about the Companions),* a dictionary of the companions, both mention Ka'b's *qasidah* (al-Fnisan, 62).

21. *'Awarif el-Maarif* (*Gifts of Deep Knowledge*) by Umar al-Suhrawardi (d.1234) mentions Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed ode in its fifth volume (al-Fnisan, 62-63).

22. *Tahdhib al-Asma wal-Lughat* by Abu Zakaria al-Nawawi (d.1277) talks about Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah* (al-Fnisan, 62).

23. Al-Nuwayri's (d.1333) *Nihayat al-Arab*, which is encyclopedia in Arabic, mentions Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed in its 16th volume (al-Fnisan, 62).

24. *Ouyun al-Athar fi Funun al-Magazi wa-Shama'il wa-Sir* by Fath al-Din ibn Sayyid al-Nas (d.1334), talks about the story of conversion and Ka'b's ode in its second part, and the author mentions the ode has 55 verses (Ikbal, p.20, and al-Fnisan, p.37-38).

25. *Tarikh al-Islam al-Kabir* (*Major History of Islam*) and *Al-Tajrid fi Asma' al-Sahaba*, which is a dictionary of the companions, by al-Dhahabi (d.1348), talks about Ka'b's ode (al-Fnisan, 62).

26. *Mughni al-Labib A'n Kutub al-A'arib* by ibn Hisham al-Ansari (d.1360) talks about Ka'b's *burdah* in the second volume (al-Fnisan, p.62, Sharrab, p.69-76, and Abu Naji, p.15).

27. *Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyah al-Kubra* by Taj al-Din Abd al-Wahhab al-Subki (d.1370) discusses the story of conversion and Ka'b's *burdah* in the first part of his book, and he mentions the ode has 53 verses (Ikbal, p.20, Sharrab, p.77, and al-Fnisan, p.42-44).

28. *Al-Bidaya wa'l-Nihaya* (*The Beginning and the End*) or *Tarikh ibn Kathir* (*Ibn Kathir's History*), which is a classic history work by ibn Kathir (d.1373), discusses Ka'b's ode in its fourth volume. The author mentions the ode has 54 verses (Ikbal, p.20-21, and al-Fnisan, p.62).

29. *Shifa' al-Gharam bi-Akhbar al-Balad al-Haram* by Muhammad ibn Ahmad Fasi (d.1429) mentions Ka'b's banat Su'ad *qasidah* in its second volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

30. *Al-Isaba fi Tamyiz al-Sahaba*, which is the most comprehensive dictionary of the companions, by ibn Hajar al-Asqalani (d.1448), mentions the story of conversion and Ka'b's ode (al-Fnisan, 44).

31. *Al-Tasrih 'ala al-Tawdhih* by Khaled al-Azhari (d.1499) mentions Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed ode in its first volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

32. *Al-Muzhir fi Ulum al-Lugha* by Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d.1505) talks about Ka'b's *burdah* in its first volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

33. *Al-Muwahib al-Ladunniyyah bi al-Minah al-Muhammadiyya*, by Ahmad ibn Muhammad al-Qastallani (d.1517), mentions Ka'b's ode in its first volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

34. *Tarikh al-Khamis*, which is a history collection about Islamic history by Husayn Diyar Bakari (d.1559), talks about Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah* in its second volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

35. *Khazinat al-Adab*, by Abdul Qadir al-Baghdadi (d.1682), mentions Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed ode in its fourth volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

36. *Sharh al-Mawahib al-Ladunniyyah*, by Muhammad al-Zurqani (d.1710), talks about Ka'b's ode in its fourth volume (al-Fnisan, 63).

37. *Al-Sirah al-Nabawiyyah* by Ahmad Zaini Dahlan (d.1887) mentions Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah* in the second volume (al-Fnisan, 64).

While Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad's Qasidah* is often cited in literary books, it can also be found in various Arabic grammar, Sufi, and hadith books. For the most part, these hadith books discuss the story of conversion linked with Ka'b's ode. These books illustrate the reputation of Ka'b's ode in this early Islamic period. On the other hand, some authors do not mention the story between Ka'b and Bujayr before his conversion (Stetkevych, 62).

In the Modern period, many books mention Ka'b's *qasidah*, especially works by notable Islamic literary scholars, including Fouad al-Boustani in his book about Ka'b ibn Zuhayr; Taha Hussein in his book on Pre-Islamic Poetry; Zaki Mubarak in his book *al-Mad'h al-Nabawiyyah*; Butrus al-Bustani in his *'Adba' al-Arab fi al-Jahillih wa al-Islam*; Hayathm, 'Atharhm, Nagd 'Atharhm; and others (al-Jamal, 10).

Chapter VI: The Influence of Ka'b's *Burdah*

Ka'b's *qasidah Banat Su'ad* illustrates how his despair and doubt became hope and his redemption, and makes his poem a model of a devotional ode, or praise poem to the Prophet, a genre known in Arabic as *madih nabawi.* In the years after the classical Arabic period, the *Banat Su'ad* inspired numerous commentaries or *shuruh*, contrafactions or *mu'aradat* (imitation poems constructed in the same rhyme and meter), and *tashtir* or *takhmis*, expansions which incorporated new material into the verses (Stetkevych, p.32, and Qumihha, p.20).

Commentaries on Ka'b's Ode:

The many *shuruh* of the *qasidah Burdah* typically analyze the ode as an expression of Ka'b's transference of his allegiance and loyalty to his tribe to a sincere belief in the way of Islam as the primary force of his existence (Stetkevych, p.36). Beginning in the 9th century AD, these many commentaries begin to appear. Abu Abbas Muhammad el-Ahwal's manuscript (d.873) details his commentary of Ka'b's *diwan* in 121 pages, and each page has 11 lines. Al-Sukari (d.888) in his commentary of Ka'b's *diwan* starts with a discussion of *Su'ad has Departed.* Another manuscript by Ibn Duraid (d.934) has commentary of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad*. Abu Abdillah Ibrahim al-Azdi (d.935), better known as Niftawayh, has a commentary of Ka'b's *burdah*. Muhammad ibn Qasim al-Anbari (d.940) has a small commentary of Ka'b's ode, contained in a manuscript in Cairo. Al-Khatib al-Tibrizi (d.1109) has commentary in Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* ode. Abu al-Barkat Abdul Rahman ibn Muhammad al-Anbari (d.1181) also authored a commentary of Ka'b's ode, published by Mahmoud Hassan Zinni in Saudi Arabia.

Al-Suhayli (d.1185) analyzes Ka'b's ode in the second volume of his book, *Al-Rawd al-Unuf fi Sarh al-Sira al-Nabawiyya.* Abu Musa al-Jazuli (d.1210) has commentary in Ka'b's *qasidah*, and his commentary is still manuscript. Hilal Naji discusses the commentary on Ka'b's ode by Abdel Latif al-Baghdadi (d.1231), also known as al-Muwafag, in a 1981 book published in Kuwait (Ikbal, p.40-44, Sharrab, p.192, al-Hatti, p.14, al-Jamal, p.7, al-Bawab, p.8, and al-Fnisan, p.103-104).

One of the greatest commentaries of Ka'b's ode was authored by Ibn Hisham al-Ansari (d.1360) and found in a book published by Mahmoud Hassan Abu Naji. This work is especially notable for its focus on Arabic language and literature. Al-Ansari explains the meanings of Ka'b's wording and discusses Arabic grammar issues. A manuscript attributed to Jamal al-Din al-Lkhmi al-Amiouti (d.1388) has a summary of ibn Hisham's commentary of Ka'b's *qasidah*. Taj al-Din Abd al-Wahhab al-Subki (d.1370) studies Ka'b's ode in the first volume in his book *Tabaqat al-Shafi'iyah al-Kubra*. Ibn Hijja al-Hamawi (d.1434) has commentary in Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* ode, published by Ali Hussayn al-Bawab. Shahab al-Din Ahmed ibn Umar al-Hindi al-Dultabadi (d.1455) has a commentary of Ka'b's ode, published in Hyderabad. Jalal al-Din al-Mahalli (d.1459) has commentary of Ka'b's *qasidah*, and his commentary is manuscript. Yusuf ibn Hassan al-Hadi al-Salihi ibn al-Mubarrad (d.1503) has commentary of Ka'b's *burdah*. His manuscript is located in al-Dhahiriya, a Palestinian city southwest of Hebron. Jalal al-Din al-Suyuti (d.1505) has commentary in Ka'b's ode, which is still manuscript in al-Dhahiriya, Tunisia, Berlin, Cambridge University library, and others. Ibn Hajar al-Haytami's (d.1566) manuscript with its commentary of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad*, can be found in Algeria, Munich, and other locations. Al-Mullah al-Harawi al-Gari (d.1606) in his book *Fath bab al-Is'ad fi Sharh Banat Su'ad* discuses Ka'b's *burdah*, and his book is still manuscript in Egypt, Munich, and

Berlin, among other collections (Ikbal, p.44-50, Sharrab, p.192, al-Hatti, p.14, p.192-193, al-Jamal, p.7-8, al-Bawab, p.8, and al-Fnisan, p.104-105).

Muhammad ibn Ahmad al-Tusi provides us with a Sufi commentary of Ka'b's ode, explaining each verse through the Sufi perspective. He analyzes Su'ad as a symbolic of felicity and the she-camel description as an endeavor to reach a goal. Abdul Qadir al-Baghdadi (d.1682) has his commentary upon ibn Hisham commentary of Ka'b's *burdah*. It is still manuscript in Medina. Muhammad ibn Abdul Baqi al-Zurqaani (d.1710) has commentary of Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* ode. Muhammad al-Magrabi al-Tavlaty al-Azhari al-Khluti (d.1777) in his book *al-Is'ad bi-Sharh Takhmis Banat Su'ad* writes commentary of Ka'b's ode. Ahmad al-Ansari al-Sharwani (d.1837) in his book *Al-Jawhar al-Wagad fi Sharh Banat Su'ad* has commentary of Ka'b's *qasidah*, published in Kolkata, India. Ibrahim al-Bajuri in his book *al-Is'ad 'ala Banat Su'ad* has commentary of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah*, published in Egypt. Muhammad al-Yacoubi al-Ailani (d.1879) writes commentary of Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* ode. Muhammad al-Marsafi (1935) in his book *Al-Gawl al-Murad fi Banat Su'ad* has a commentary on Ka'b's burdah. Muhammad al-Makki al-Batawri (d.1936) in his book *Al-Ists'ad fi Qasidat Banat Su'ad* discuses Ka'b's ode (Ikbal, p.50-60, al-Jamal, p.8, and al-Fnisan, p.105-106).

In addition, there are some commentaries of Ka'b's *qasidah* by unknown authors. While the majority of commentaries are in Arabic, some were written in other languages, including two commentaries in Persian and two in Turkish (Ikbal, 61-64).

Ka'b's Ode *Mu'ardat*:

Given its prominence as one of the most widely read examples of classic Arabic literature, Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* has influenced a number of contrafactions or *mu'aradat*,

which seek to emulate the original verses in the same rhyme and meter. This format of poetic expression was widespread and encouraged many Muslim Arab poets to compete in praising the Prophet Muhammad using the same basic rhythmic structure of meter (*bahr*) and rhyme (*rawi*) as in Ka'b's ode (Stetkevych, p.70, and Ikbal, p.79). Of these *mu'aradat,* al-Shamakh ibn Dirar al-Thubiani's (d.644) was the first. His *mu'aradah* at 30 verses is about half the length of Ka'b's *burdah*, which is between 55-59 verses. 'Abdah ibn al-Tabib's (d.634) *mu'aradah* of *Su'ad Has Departed*, is much longer and contains 81 verses. In addition, Akhtal (d.710) wrote a *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *qasidah* in 32 verses. These *mu'aradat* from these three poets exemplify the use of the template from Ka'b's ode by following in his treatment of the subject, praise of the Prophet Muhammad (Ikbal, 82-83).

Moreover, al-Zamakhshari (d.1143) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's ode, which is 36 verses. Abu al-Muzaffar al-'Abiordi (d.1114) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *qasidah*. It is 30 verses. Abu al-Hassan Ali al-Khwarizmi (d.1165) has contrafaction of Ka'b's *burdah*. Amin al-Din al-Tanukhi (d.1246) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed ode. It is 140 verses. Yahya ibn Yusuf al-Sarsari (d.1258) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's ode, which is 98 verses. Muhyi al-Din ibn Abdul Zahir (d.1292) has contrafaction of Ka'b's *qasidah* (Ikbal, 83-85).

Al-Busiri (d.1294-97) has authored perhaps the most famous *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad*. His ode is more than 200 verses, and he refers to the story of Ka'b's conversion in the last part of his poem (Ikbal, p.86, Kilani, p.316, and al-Jamal, p.9). In addition, Shihab al-Din Ahmed al-'Arazi al-Masri has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's ode, which is 52 verses. Ibn Sayyid al-Nas has contrafaction of Ka'b's *qasidah*, which is 186. He gives his poem a title *'Udat al-Ma'ad fi 'Arud Banat Su'ad*. Ibn Hayyan al-Andalusi (d.1345) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *burdah*, which is 83 verses. Ibn Jaber al-Andalusi (d.1378) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's ode, which is 116 verses.

He mentions as al-Busiri the story of Ka'b's conversion in the last part of his ode, and he hopes that God will forgive his sin as Ka'b. Salah al-Din al-Safadi (d.1363) has contrafaction of Ka'b's Su'ad Has Departed ode, which is 68 verses. Ibn Nabata al-Masri (d.1366) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *qasidah*. It is 82 verses. Also, Burhan al-Din al-Ta'I al-Masri (d.1380) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's ode, which is 181 verses. Shams al-Din Muhammad al-Zamardi (d.1385), who knows as Ibn al-Sa'igh, has of Ka'b's *qasidah*. It is 43 verses. Izz al-Din al-Musli (d.1387) has contrafaction of Ka'b's *burdah*, which is 33 verses. Nur al-Din al-Tamimi has mu'aradah of Ka'b's ode, which is 100 verses.

In the beginning, these *mu'aradat* were authored without titles, although later, some poets began to use titles of their *mu'aradat.* Ala' al-Din al-Dimshgi, who is also known as Ibn Aybk, composes a *mu'aradah* of 53 verses, to which he gives the title *Shams al-Matal' fi Madh al-Gamar al-Tal'*. Similarly, Fairuzabadi (d.1414) writes his contrafaction of Ka'b's *burdah* in 168 verses, and titles it *Zad al-Ma'ad fi Wazn Banat Su'ad*. Jamal al-Din al-Makki (d.1417), known as Ibn Dhahirah, composed a *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *qasidah*, which is 52 verses. Ahmad al-Qalqashandi (d.1418) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad*, which is 44 verses. Shams al-Din al-Nwagi al-Masri (d.1455) has contrafaction of Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* of 87 verses. Baha' al-Din al-Ba'oni (d.1511) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's ode, which is 78 verses. Ibn Malik al-Hamwi (d.1512) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *qasidah*, which is 54 verses. Abdul Rahman al-Hamidi al-Warraq al-Masri (d.1597) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *burdah*. Abd al-Ghani al-Nabulsi (d.1731) has *mu'aradah* of Ka'b's *Banat Su'ad qasidah*, which is 50 verses (Ikbal, p.86-98, and al-Fnisan, p.109-146). This listing of the numerous *mu'aradat* of Ka'b's *burdah* ode indicates the very significant place it occupies both in classic and modern Arabic literature.

Translations of Ka'b's Ode:

Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* has also generated considerable interest in the non-Arabic/Islamic world, which has resulted in translations to many other languages. The first of these translations in the modern period (1748) was to Latin (al-Fnisan, 107). Others followed, including German, English, Italian, French, Polish, Persian, Turkish, Hindustani, and Punjabi (Ikbal, p.123, al-Hatti, p.15, al-Jamal, p.9, and al-Fnisan, p.107).

***Al-Mada'ih al-Nabawiyah*:**

In the pre-Islamic era, the first praising ode to the Prophet Muhammad was by Ragigh bint Abi Saifi ibn Hashim ibn Abd Manaf, written when the Prophet was still a child. Abu Talib ibn Abdul-Muttalib (d.619), an uncle of the Prophet, was the second poet who composed verse in praise of the Prophet, a work of more than 80 verses. During the Prophet's adult life, one of the earliest praises was composed by a member of the Banu Khazraj tribe, Hassan ibn Thabit, known as one of the Sahaba (companions of the Prophet Muhammad). According to tradition, he was the Prophet's court poet. Other notables included Anas ibn Zanim al-Kenani, Ka'b ibn Malik, Abd Allah ibn Rawahah, Abd Allah ibn al-Zubara followed in this tradition. The earliest odes to the Prophet Muhammad after his death were written by al-Kumayt ibn Zayd al-Asadi (d.743), who wrote several praise poems dedicated to the Prophet, known as *Hashimayyat* (Sharrab, 219-225).

Ka'b's *burdah* became the archetypal example of poetic verse in praise of the Prophet Muhammad. It became the inspiration for many Arabic poets and a path as they composed their own praise poetry (Qumihha, 20). During 12-19th centuries, in the period known as *Asr al-Inhitat* or the Age of Decline, this tradition of composing praise poems (*mada'ih nabawiyah*) to the Prophet by Muslims continued and in particular by followers of the Sufi tradition

(Stetkevych, p.66 & 149, and Kilani, p.316). *Madai'h nabawiyah* is an example of the influence of Sufi scholars (Sharrab, 242). Their praising of the Prophet is different, because they favored *madih* to *ghazal* in their description of the Prophet's lights and his face (Kilani, 318 and 327).

Ka'b, al-Busiri, and Shawqi:

Ka'b, al-Busiri, and Ahmed Shawqi have the most famous Arabic praising odes to the Prophet Muhammad. Each of these poets starts their *burdah* poems with a lyrical *nasib* or *ghazal* (Stetkevych, 71, 84-85, & 154). In the Sufi tradition of Arabic poetry, Sharaf al-Din Abu 'Abd Allah Muhammad ibn Sa'id al-Busiri (d.1294-97) is especially noted for two praising verses of the Prophet, his *burdah* and *hamziyyah* odes. Tradition states that when he walked in the street, both young and old would rush out to greet him and kiss his hand. His *hamziyyah*, (an ode rhymed in the letter *hamzah*) is *Umm al-Qura' fi Madh Khayr al-Wara* (The Mother of Villages in Praise of the Best of Mankind). He titled his burdah, a *mimiyyah*, (an ode rhymed in the letter *mim*), *Al-Kawakib al-Durriyyah fi Madh Khayr al-Bariyyah* (Pearly Stars in Praise of the Best of All Creation) written in praise of the Prophet before he cured al-Busiri of paralysis by appearing to him in a dream and wrapping him in a mantle or cloak.

Al-Busiri also composed a praising *lamiyyah* ode, (which is rhymed with the letter *lam*) entitled *Dhukhr al-Ma'ad fi Wazn Bant Su'ad* (The Storehouse [or good deeds] for Judgment Day in the Meter of *Su'ad has Departed*). Al-Busiri's praise odes can be divided to two periods, the time before his personal hajj and the time after his return. Before his hajj, he composed one of his praising odes when he first saw the grave of the Prophet Muhammad (Stetkevych, p.70 & 82, and Smith, p.50 & 54-56).

However, some Salafi scholars contend that some verses of al-Busiri's *burdah* ode are *shirk*, which is the sin of idolatry, or associating beings or things with God. The criticism of these verses is about their elevation of the Prophet to the status of God, and verse 154 of al-Busiri's burdah is cited as one example (Stetkevych, p.144, and Smith, p.57):

For indeed both this world and the next come from your generosity,

And out knowledge of the Pen and Tablet comes from your knowledge.

Al-Busiri told of the miraculous circumstances, which became his inspiration to write his *burdah* ode, *"I had composed poems of praise to the Messenger, peace be upon him, and among them are those that al-Sahib Zayn al-Din Ya'qub ibn al-Zubayr had suggested to me. Then it happened after that I was stricken with hemiplegia that left me half paralyzed, so I thought of composing this Burdah poem, and I did so. And with it I asked for intercession with Allah the Exalted to forgive me, and I recited it over and over again, and wept and prayed and entreated. Then, when I had fallen asleep, I saw the Prophet, peace be upon him. He stroked my face with his blessed hand, and then threw an mantle over me. When I awoke, I found my health restored [wajadtu fiyya nahdah], so I arose and went out of my house, and I had not told a soul about this. Then a Sufi mendicant met up with me and said, 'I want you to give me the one. The one you composed when you were sick' he said, and recited the beginning of it. And he continued, 'By Allah, I heard it last night when it was recited before the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, and I saw the Messenger of Allah, peace be upon him, sway with delight at it, and throw a mantle over the one who recited it.' So I gave it to him, and the Sufi mendicant mentioned this and the dream became widely known."* (Stetkevych, 83).

Al-Busiri's *burdah* ode is divided into ten sections: *al-nasib al-nabawi* (prophetic nasib), Verses 1-11 a lyric-elegiac prelude, *al-tahdhir min hawa al-nafs* (warning against the desires of

the self), Verses 11-28, *madh al-rasul al-karim* (praise of the noble Messenger), Verses 29-58, *al-tahadduth 'an mawlidih* (What is related about his birth), Verses 59-71, *al-thadduth 'an mu'jizatih* (What is related about his miracles), Verses 72-87, *al-tahadduth 'an al-Qur'an al-karim* (What is related about the noble Qur'an), Verses. 88-104, *al-tahadduth 'an al-Isra' wa-al-Mi'raj* (What is related about the Night Journey and Ascension): Verses 105-117, *al-tahadduth 'an jihad al-Rasul wa-ghazawatih* (What is related about the jihad and military campaigns of the Messenger), Verses 118-139, *al-tawassul aw-al-tashaffu'* (supplication and plea for intercession), *al-munajah wa-al-taaearru'* (fervent prayer and petition), Verses 152-160 (Stetkevych, 90-91).

Since the 13th century, Sufis and other scholars of Arabic literature have paid much attention to al-Busiri's praising odes, especially his *burdah*. Hundreds of commentaries of his *burdah* ode exist. Some poets after al-Busiri wrote contrafactions (*mu'aradat*) and expansions (*tashtir*, *takhmis*) of his *burdah* (Sharrab, 245-247). His *burdah* ode has been translated worldwide into Persian, Urdu, Turkish, Berber, Punjabi, English, French, German, Sindhi, Norwegian, and other languages (Smith, 57). The uses for al-Busiri's *burdah* are different from location to location. In some locales, it is recited in public during a variety of religious events, including the Prophet's birthday (*mawlid al-nabi*), at funerals, or recitations associated with Friday prayers (Stetkevych, 71).

Perhaps the third most famous *burdah* ode is *Nahj al-Burdah qasidah* (The Way of the Mantle) by Ahmed Shawqi (d.1932), an Egyptian poet laureate who pioneered the modern Egyptian literary movement, and recognized one of the greatest Arabic poets in the modern period (Smith, 87-89). He has a large *diwan*, called *Al-Shawqiyyat*, contained in four volumes.

Nahj al-Burdah is Shawqi's *mu'aradah* of al-Busiri's *burdah* (Stetkevych, 151-152). It is divided into two movements each containing twelve sections:

Movement I: In the Path of al-Busiri

1. Nasib: Complaint of Unrequited Love (Verses 1-24)
2. Chiding the Unruly Soul –Warning against Worldly Temptations (Verses 25-38)
3. Repentance, Submission, and Supplication (Verses 39-46)
4. Prophetic Praise (Verses 46/47-74)
5. Sirah Themes (Verses 75-99)

   The Birth of the Prophet (Verses 75-82)

   The Night Journey and Ascension (Verses 83-93)

   The Miracle of the Cave (Verses 94-99)
6. Metapodetic Recapitulation of Prophetic Praise (Verses 100-117)

Movement II: Deviation and Transformation

7. Polemic against Christians and Christianity (Verses 118-128)
8. Defense/Praise of Jihad and the Prophet's Military Campaigns (Verses 129-141)
9. The Shari'ah (Verses 142-154)
10. The Glory of Baghdad (Verses 155-164)
11. The Orthodox Caliphs (Verses 165-176)
12. Benediction and Supplication (Verses 177-190) (Stetkevych, p.165)

While there were hundreds of praise odes to the Prophet Muhammad composed both during his life and after his death, Ka'b's *burdah*, al-Busiri's *Qasidat al-Burda,* and Shawqi's *Nahj al-Burdah* are the most renowned and influential. Of these three, Ka'b's *Su'ad Has Departed* is certainly the most widely known, even though Ka'b did not focus on religious

concepts as al-Busiri and Ahmad Shawqi subsequently did. Ka'b follows the pre-Islamic *madih* structure in his supplicatory ode and documents his transformation from a pre-Islamic belief system to his conversion to Islam. His poem may have become widely accepted because of his compelling story of his conversion and the Prophet's burdah (Hassan, 139). The many commentaries, *mu'aradat*, and translations of Ka'b's ode illustrate its far-reaching influence on subsequent Islamic scholars and poets for centuries thereafter. Al-Busiri's praise ode details the *barakah* (the beneficent force from God that flows through the physical and spiritual spheres), which is represented in the Prophet's miraculous cure of his grave condition. And in a later century, Ahmed Shawqi's *Nahj al-Burdah* revisits the classic Arab poetic tradition, providing yet another tribute to the Prophet.

Conclusion

Odes in praise of the Prophet Muhammad are a distinct genre of Islamic poetry, which first emerged during his lifetime and have continued after his death in 632. Notable Muslim poets who composed such works during his life include Ka'b ibn Malik, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr, al-Nabigha al-Ja'di, and Abd Allah ibn Rawahah. Non-Muslims too, such as the blind poet Al-A'sha, also contributed to this accumulation of praising odes. After the Prophet's death, numerous poets and scholars such as al-Kumayt, Aktal, al-Zamakhshari, al-Busiri, Shawqi, and others continued to create both poetry and various related documents, including commentaries, *mu'aradat*, and translations.

Three famous examples of odes praising the Prophet Muhammad are Ka'b's *burdah*, al-Busiri's *burdah*, and Shawqi's *Nahj al-Burdah*. The earliest of these, Ka'b's *burdah* ode, documents his encounter with the Prophet and conversion to Islam. Born in the 7th century to a family in which his father, grandfather, aunt, uncle, and later his son, and grandson were poets, Ka'b ibn Zuhayr ibn Abi Sulma al-Muzani has emerged as an important seminal Arabic poet, a *mukhadram*, with works which show the transition from the pre-Islamic to the classical Islamic periods. Ka'b's poems range from *wasf* (descriptive poems) to *madh* (odes in praising) and *hija* (satire or lampooning) and are eloquent, coherent, and consistent. In total, there are more than four *diwans* of Ka'b's poems.

Ka'b's ode can be divided to three parts: the elegiac prelude (*nasib*) in verses1-12, the desert journey (*rahil*) in verses13-33, and the praise section (*madih*) in verses 33-55. His poem

shows his personal transformation from *Jahiliyyah* to his acceptance of Islam. The compelling story of Ka'b's conversion, the Prophet's gift of his mantle, and the eloquent of the poem was widely circulated during the time of the Prophet and thereafter. Today, the ode is considered a prototype of the praise poem, although it contains few religious concepts. Its influence can be seen in the hundreds of commentaries, *mu'aradat*, and translations of Ka'b's ode, in both manuscript and published formats.

In later centuries, al-Busiri and Shawqi continued the tradition when they wrote their praise odes, which expanded Ka'b's original content with additional religious and spiritual themes. Al-Busiri's embrace of Sufi theology can be seen in his burdah, while Shawqi's poem reflects the return to this genre in the period known as *al-Nahda*, the Muslim cultural renaissance of the late 19th century.

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